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ABSTRACT

This paper presents 26 selections of students' prose and poetry from the anthology "There's a Soul Arising in My Mind" and as presented on a New York City radio show. The prose selections come from a form of journal writing called "contemplation writing," a pre-poetry program that uses music, writing, and discussion to guide children into journeys of self-discovery. The poetry selections were written after eight weeks of contemplation writing activities. To show how contemplation writing can be an important preliminary step to poetry, the order of presentation in the paper is contemplation-poem-contemplation-poem. (RS)

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ED 420 863

Poetry-In-The-Morning On WNYE FM New York Presents THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND

Prose And Poetry Collected By Jeffrey Pflaum Part One

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J. Pflaum

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CS216378

OPENER: SHOW #1

TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE ON WNYE-FM PRESENTS "POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING." I'M JEFFREY PFLAUM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL 16 IN DISTRICT 14, WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN.

I'm going to read selections from my students' prose and poetry anthology titled THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND. The prose comes from a form of journal writing that I have developed called "Contemplation Writing." This pre-poetry program uses music, writing, and discussion to guide children into journeys of self-discovery. They learn to deal with inner experience through mind-pictures, feelings, and thoughts, all key components necessary for poetry writing.

In the first part of a typical lesson, students listen to music to relax, and then, use the mind's eye to contemplate experience. Contemplation is followed by writing. Their responses are read aloud during a discussion period without revealing the authors' identities due to the very personal nature of the writings.

After completing eight weeks of contemplation writing, I introduce poetry. The youngsters are ready to make the transition because they have become accustomed to dealing with experience and expressing it in their contemplations.

In my reading, the order of presentation is: contemplation--poem--contemplation--poem, etc. The reason for juxtaposing the prose and poetry is to show how contemplation writing can be an important preliminary step to poetry. The names of the students who wrote the contemplations will be given at the end of the reading.

Contemplation #25

I felt so relaxed and tired. I closed my eyes and saw flowers blooming in different colors. There were beautiful butterflies, grass, trees, lakes, insects, and a pretty blue sky on a warm, sunny day. But then something else came into the picture: It was a block of black smoke. Everything turned black and gray. It was horrible because all the beauty that was there changed into rats and garbage. It looked like the city dump because that's how dirty it was. I wish things would be like the first picture.

Veronica Andujar

BLACK CLOUD

I look up at the sky
where I see the black cloud
like a crayon coloring the air
slowly--slowly--slowly

Betty Cottes

Contemplation #5

While the music was on, I thought about how everybody treats me. I'm a piece of trash like an old newspaper. I am always rejected. Nobody really cares if something happens to me. If I'm having an argument, they try to push me into a fight. They only want to be your friend if you have something. They fight me back with their words and I can't say anything to them. I have one friend I am always afraid of hurting because she's friends with me. No one wants to be her friend. Sometimes I say to myself, "Life stinks."

Sarai Tejada

LONELY

In a playground
children running
they vacate
one by one
a little boy was left
alone
on a seesaw
he gets off and
leaves
now I'm alone
alone in a park
with no one beside me
except my shadow
a desolate shadow
fading away

Glennie Llano

Contemplation #6

Fear is something each of us carries inside ourselves everyday of our lives. When you're little, you're scared of the dark. When you're old, you're scared of death. You can be afraid of scary movies and you can have the fear of getting hit by a baseball when batting. You fear going to sleep one day and not knowing if you're going to get up the next. There's the fear of not knowing whether you're going to win or lose a big game. You can have the fear of nightmares when you wake up at 3 a.m. all sweaty and anxious to go back to sleep. That's something that gets you to do childish things like sleeping with the lights on. It's like smoking cigarettes or doing drugs. Once you do it, you do it again and again. The idea is not to let the fear take you over. You overcome the fear.

Francisco Rosado

A FRIGHTENED GIRL

The frightened girl
is in her
room with a gun
Because she has
been angry
for years.

Jose Perez

Contemplation #14

Today, after lunch, everyone needed something to talk about. Juan went to a girl in Class 6-1 and asked her if she really kissed me in the second grade. She said "yes." I feel like killing him for asking her and telling Mike. Now everyone is talking about it and putting me down. I'll get even.

John Arce

THE WORLD OF HATE

the world of hate
nobody gets what
they want it's not
just free you pay cash
I know sometimes you
hate this world but
the world sometimes
is full of hate

Gregory Kettrles

Contemplation #9

I was thinking that I went to hell and saw lots of people. I met the Devil and he said, "Greetings, another customer." I said, "What do you do down here?" He said, "Make people angry." "So why am I here?," I said. "I'm not angry. I'm just sick of you making people angry." Then I saw a dagger and threw it and hit the Devil. He died and there was no such thing as hell anymore.

Quincy Calhoun

ANGER AND HATE

I hate when
something bad
happens i try
not to take my
anger out on people
sometimes i
just can't
help it

Gregory Kettrles

Contemplation #2

When I closed my eyes, I saw a dream I once had. It was about me and twenty other people who were on a train that kept riding and riding. I looked out the window and watched the houses passing by. Suddenly, the train began going faster and faster. There was no engineer. The train was out of control. The only way out was to jump. The train kept going and going. Each time five people jumped and landed safely. Soon there were no more people left except myself. The train passed my house, I jumped to safety, and went home.

Lonnie Zuckerman

TORNADO

wind, sand, storm
to blast us
away from
life

Perry Backman

Contemplation #4

While the music played, I fantasized that I was a candy bar and nobody ever bought me. One day a man walked in the door and asked, "How much is this 'Snicker' bar (which was me)?" The clerk said "fifty cents," and the man bought me. When he got home, he put me into the refrigerator. There I stood for a while and froze. He took me out and he was just about to eat me and I started saying, "Oh please don't eat me, please." And then the music shut off and that was the end.

Janelle Viruet

SHADOWS

Nothing but shadows
Following me
Everywhere I go
Nothing I can do
Yet nothing I could say
For the shadows still
Follow me

Darren Scantlebury

Contemplation #17

As the music played, the walls started to come in on us. We all started screaming. Finally, we were in the middle of the room. The walls, suddenly, stopped moving. And right over us, a bright light appeared. It was like the sun over us. We tried to look for the door, but there was no way out. One of the children said, "Why don't we try to climb into the bright light?" So we did. We ended up on the roof of the school. Everyone said, "Let's jump!" So we did, and landed safely. We all decided to walk home. But when we each got to our house, there was no one home. As a matter of fact, there was no one, nowhere. It was just us. And we all met at the front of the school and stood there frightened.

Angie Cosme

PUBLIC SCHOOL

When I go to school
in the morning it's
quiet but the later it
gets the louder it gets
people are crowded in the
lunchroom little kids are
running all over the school
and getting caught by
a teacher or principal
and getting suspended
for a week while other
kids are playing tackle
football in the lunchroom
and special ed kids chasing
girls around the lunchroom
and auditorium and then the
teachers are yelling and
screaming which makes the
kids and teachers mad.

Juan Serrano

Contemplation #23

As I listened to the tape, I started laughing to myself just to get the Jewish girl out of my mind, but she wouldn't leave. I laughed even harder and I still saw her. I am so shocked. I used to see her everyday with two braids. She was so conservative. She was so covered up when she dressed that she wouldn't attract anyone. When I saw the news, and when the detective came to my house, as well as Channel 7, it was the real thing happening in my building. I felt it in my heart as if she was real close. I saw her. I saw her every morning and now I won't. I won't see her again.

Glennie Llano

THE STREET

Gunshots ring out.
People screaming, running, hiding.
Sirens blaring.
Someone's down.
Who just fell?
No one could tell.
In the air a silent hush.
And people murmur
how the streets can crush.

Lonnie Zuckerman

Contemplation #6

While the music was playing, I thought about a dream I had about me. I went to heaven to visit my Grandparents, my Uncle Mickey, and other members from the family. They all had my good food ready for me. They were angels and asked me if I wanted to become an angel. I said, "Yes, but not any time soon. I want to live as long as I can." And my Grandfather said, "You live today, but you die tomorrow." Then my alarm clock went off and I saw a plate with a lot of my favorite foods on it.

Diana Arroyo

STRESS

You wish you were dominant.
You try to control, but you can't.
If you let go, what can go wrong?
The next day in the world is your last.
The Devil's curse affects your life.
A story as told before: A lost soul
comes and takes over. You think about
the death dream. Everything is washed
away.

Elio Rodriguez

Contemplation #27

Today I feel like telling the truth. I am having feelings lately about death. You know, I wonder why we were put on earth alive even though we eventually die. Today I felt like dying because I might have brains and muscles, but it feels like I have no heart. Something is beating, but not my heart. It's a thing and I don't know what it is. And today, after jogging, I saw myself decreasing in size.

Juan Serrano

MY NAME IS NOTHING

My name is nothing.
My eyes can't see.
Me ears can't hear.
My mouth can't talk.
My legs can't walk.
My hands can't touch.
My body can't move.
My heart can't love.
Nothing can do nothing.
My name is nothing.

Lissette Toro

Contemplation #29

I have no reason for living. I am kicked around like a playground ball. I don't even like myself. The world is an ugly place. I feel like committing suicide. I almost did two weeks ago, but didn't. Today, everything went wrong. If one more thing goes wrong today, I will do it. I will. I swear on my grandmother's grave. I will!!! My self-esteem is down to zero. If I even feel this way again, it will be too soon. I will kill myself. I mean it. Nobody will care--not even my parents. It's a free country. I can kill myself, and I will. You can bet on it! I am almost dead anyway. The doctor said I may have to be operated on, but I'm not going to go through with it. That will show the world! You can bet on it. I will kill myself in any way that I can!!!!

Sarai Tejada

HIDE TIDE

I'm rocking in a boat
The tide is too
High
For no particular reason
I jumped into the
sea
Feeling nothing now
But the water rushing
Against my skin
And now
nothing else

Darren Scantlebury

Contemplation #32

See, I try to talk freely, but the only person I feel I can talk to--though she is dead--was my mother. My mother was the only one who I felt comfortable talking to. Today, I am thinking how short life is and how sad and mean it could be at times. Life is a kick in the ass. When I saw Nadia crying, I remembered when my mother died and I cried for days. When I stopped, I stopped.

Juan Serrano

SHORT LIFE

in life people must
die while others live
a long life people
should know that life
is just like ink in
a pen it just runs
out and then it is
dead

Juan Serrano

SHOW #1

The following students contributed their contemplations:

1) Veronica Andujar

2) Sarai Tejada

3) Francisco Rosado

4) Lonnie Zuckerman

5) Janelle Viruet

6) Angie Cosme

7) Glennie Llano

8) Diana Arroyo

9) Juan Serrano

10) John Arce

11) Quincy Calhoun

CLOSER: SHOW #1

FOR TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE, I'M JEFFREY PFLAUM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL 16 IN WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN. "POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING" IS PRODUCED BY IRWIN GONSHAK AND BROADCAST ON WNYE-FM...NEW YORK.

TEACHERS & WRITERS FLYER HIGHLIGHTS

POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING: SHOW #1

Teacher/writer and photogrpaher Jeffrey Pflaum of PS 16 (District 14) in Williamsburg reads prose and poetry from his students' anthology THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND. The prose comes from his character education program, called "Contemplation Writing", that develops "emotional intelligence" in children. The contemplation project, published by T & W, is a pre-poetry program using music, writing, and discussion to guide students into journeys of self-discovery.

POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING: SHOW #2

Teacher/writer and photographer Jeffrey Pflaum of P.S. 16 (District 14) in Williamsburg continues to read his students' prose and poetry from their anthology titled THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND. The prose selections are from an original project published by T & W called "Contemplation Writing" which sensitizes children to themselves and others. The contemplation program becomes an important preliminary step to poetry because some basic elements of poetry--images, feelings, and thoughts--are intensely dealt with in discussions and writings.

Poetry-In-The-Morning On WNYE FM New York Presents THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND

Prose And Poetry Collected By Jeffrey Pflaum Part Two

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OPENER: SHOW #2

TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE ON WNYE-FM PRESENTS "POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING." I'M JEFFREY PFLAUM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL 16 IN DISTRICT 14, WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN.

Today I would like to continue reading works from my students' prose and poetry compilation titled THERE'S A SOUL ARISING IN MY MIND. The prose selections are from an original program called "Contemplation Writing" which sensitizes children to themselves and others.

During the contemplation periods, music lays the foundation for relaxation, concentration, and contemplation, enabling students to illuminate their minds with the spotlight of the inner eye. Children visualize experiences and become aware of the "charge" of emotions and thoughts surrounding them.

After several weeks of contemplation writing, poetry is introduced. Contemplation Writing prepares the students for poetry. Throughout our writing and discussion sessions, we express and convey some basic elements of poetry--images, feelings, and thoughts.

Today's presentation of writings will come in the following order: contemplation--poem--contemplation--poem, and so on, to demonstrate the relationship between the contemplations and the poetry.

Contemplation #24

I thought about what Mr. Pflaum told me about my father. And I think he is right in a way, but I still don't have anything to do with him. I have his telephone number, but I don't want to call him. My mother always tells me to call, but I don't want to, and I don't. And I don't want to write any letters because I know he isn't going to have any time to answer them. I will tell you the reason why. It is because he hasn't come around on my birthdays, Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. If I don't call him and tell him what date my graduation is, he wouldn't even know about it or come. I know he loves me because I am his only daughter left. My other two sisters are dead. He didn't even bother to tell me I had sisters or a brother. And don't get me wrong, I love my father with all my heart, and I know he loves me, too, but he has a funny way of showing it. To tell you the truth, I don't want to see him for the rest of my life. I haven't seen him for six years. Last year (1990), I started to see him and then I stopped because he has a wife now. They think that they could start playing mommy and daddy and I'm the daughter. I would love to tell him this, but I have too much of a heart. I am so happy that I got this out in the open.

Marilyn Rodriguez

A MAN'S LOVE

I've lost my
Girl
Cause I stoled
her pearls
I needed the money
to buy me a car
a home and food
I'm sorry
for being
so rude
Please
forgive
me
for the shoes
I washed them
with clorox bleach
I thought they were
white
But they were red
I'm sorry
So sorry
forgive me

Erika Perez

Contemplation #8

I once had a dream that I was lost and couldn't find my parents. I was so scared that I didn't know where to go. I didn't have anything to eat and walked all around trying to find my mother and family. A lady had asked me, "Are you lost?," and I said, "Yes, I want my mom and dad. My name is Janelle _____." And the lady was my mom! She said, "Oh my God, Janelle, it's you. I can't believe it!" She grabbed me and hugged me and then she took me home. Everybody was so happy. The End.

Janelle Viruet

FEELINGS

I am sad.
Now I'm angry.
For no reason,
I think of the sky.
Look out the window
and cheer myself up.
My mom says I have
a problem.
I better fix it.
Or she's going to hit me.
I start crying.
We're at the bottom,
one more time.

Fanny Martinez

Contemplation #12

I thought about what happened the other day. My friend Yanadi and I were walking down the street and my other friends, Jennifer and Wilda, came by. Jennifer is fat and Wilda is medium. Jennifer wore a purple outfit and it looked terrible, but I kept my mouth shut. The outfit made her look fatter, twice as fat. Yanadi and Wilda asked her if she was the Goodyear Blimp. Later, much later, I got a word in and said, "Yeah, that's right." But when Jennifer and I were alone, I told her that I didn't mean it. I was just kidding. The next day, an elder from my church talked to Yanadi and Wilda about what had happened. Jennifer had told on us, but her mother told the elder (who shall stay nameless), that she would take care of me. I told Jennifer that I was kidding. We always play like that. Somehow, I think, somewhere along the line, she took me seriously.

Sarai Tejada

PRISM P[illegible] CAUTIONS

The Prism of the Mind
is kept down inside
waiting to come out and grow
bending reflections of truth.

Ismael Torres

Contemplation #16

I felt horrible. You see, my parents are thinking of getting a divorce, and it makes me sad. I feel as if I'm being pulled in all directions. I'm being torn from limb to limb and it hurts. I see them fighting all the time. Every time he comes home, my sister and I go to our rooms so we don't have to hear them--even though we do. My sister and I start crying because just listening to them gets us upset. Yesterday, they really went at it. My mother was very upset. She looked like she was going to explode. I feel as if I made them angry and it's my fault, but I know it isn't. I just wish that they would stop fighting. My mom said that we are going to move out.

Katrina Irizarry

THE REBEL

Think beyond
The borders of reality.
Look to him, yes him,
The Rebel of Truth,
An Outcast to all.
See him weep,
See him sob.
This is a man of Truth.

Ismael Torres

Contemplation #35

While the music was on, I thought about my cousin. He's nice and all, but he's always correcting me. He thinks he's perfect. It's kind of like a pencil writing and another pencil is behind it, erasing away all the words the pencil wrote.

Anthony Rivera

MYSELF

Myself
I don't know enough about myself
Is that a crime
No but my mind tells me it is
I don't understand
Stop all of this
please
please
no mercy you show
stop
please
I know enough about
myself

Darren Scantlebury

Contemplation #29

I was thinking about myself, how sometimes I want something, but I don't know what. Or, sometimes, I am in a sad mood and I don't know why. Sometimes I don't want to talk or hear anyone. I just want to escape from everything, but there is no hiding place. There is no door with a key to lock yourself inside because someone always knocks on that door. Sometimes I feel isolated when I feel that I don't know anything at all. I feel...confused.

Glennie Llano

BAREFOOT

run, run
for life,
but how,
without shoes?

Perry Backman

Contemplation #22

I pictured myself on a beach and there was a red, purple, orange, and blue sky. The ocean was clear and very quiet. Suddenly, I felt my soul rising from the ocean. I saw myself standing on the ocean--not me, but my spirit. Was I dead? I must have been. The spirit went away in my dream and I said, "It was just my mind." I returned home and everyone was dressed in black. They were going to my funeral. I thought it was real, and then I really woke up. I looked at everyone and remembered we had to do contemplation.

Glennie Llano

A GLASS OF MILK

A glass of milk,
Shining like the sky,
As white as the snow,
And cold like the breeze,
Goes down your throat,
Everything you thought
Now is nothing.

Angel Monserrate

Contemplation #21

I really got into the music. I fell into a very good mood. I felt like dancing. I was really relaxed. It was great. The music burned a smile on my face. It just woke me up. I felt like the music was inside of me. It lit up my day. I mean, if it wasn't for the music, I wouldn't get into anything. I never thought that contemplation could be this much fun.

Irvin Lopez

JUST THINKING

The radio was on
I was just sitting there
listening
to the words
and the beat
of the song
It was quiet
I sat there
thinking
thinking how to write my life
in a poem
how could I explain it
in words
the poem would never end

Glennie Llano

Contemplation #11

I had a picture of a lot of bubbles, and inside of them were kids from the class. Everyone was trying to get out. But suddenly someone came. Nobody knew him. Everyone said, "Who is that?" He took out a giant pin and started popping everybody's bubbles. We were all free. But I didn't find out what happened because the music went off.

Angie Cosme

CLARA

My, my Clara,
everyone looks for the woman
who feeds the cats,
the homeless
and the poor.

My, my Clara,
everyone looks for Clara,
the woman with
tender eyes
and warm smile.

My, my Clara,
the woman who cares
for the wounded hearts
and troubled minds.

My, my Clara,
the woman who travels
from Williamsburg to Boro Park,
and back again
with just $1.15,
and returns again
with shopping bags
of clothes and toys
for all the street children.

My, my Clara,
the woman with such love
and kindness
for the human race,
such courage and loyalty,
Clara treats everyone
the same.

My, my Clara,
what will we do
without
Clara?

Melissa Perez

Contemplation #12

I had a dream that I was so scared that I decided to jump off the Williamsburg Bridge and die. I drove to the bridge and went off. When the car hit the water, it broke into pieces. I was dead and it was horrifying to all the people. The next day, a man was fishing and my head got caught onto the hook. He thought that he had a big fish, but it was only my head laughing. The man got so frightened that he ran back home and never came out.

Jason Dueno

SKY

The sky is a loneliness
From darkest space
To the unknown stars.

The commotion nightmare
Is suffering scared
Drifting away
Into the midnights.

The helpless future
In the sky...
Nervous dreams

Ernesto Marquez

Contemplation #27

While the music was playing, I thought about the letter Mr. Pflaum wrote home to me this weekend. His last line on the letter really said a lot about what I'm doing in school--which isn't much. He wrote, "I'm an old song which can become a sad one if I keep doing what I'm doing in school." Now I think I understand about putting more effort into all my work instead of just saying, "Well, this is easy so I'll do it another time when I can do it quickly." I also found out that my father went through the exact same thing I'm going through now. I said to him the next day, "If you know what happened to you, tell me before I go through that phase of life." I realized that I have to get my butt back on course before I end up working as the guy in the zoo who picks up after the elephants.

Hiram Quesada

THE ART OF ILLUSION

The **Art**
of
Illusion
Confuses
the **Mind:**
What may
the **Truth**
bring?

Ismael Torres

Contemplation #10

As the music played, I felt the sound of the flute go into my head. I thought about whales in the deep blue sea. I just imagined the whales going in and out of the water. The splash of the whales' was gigantic and their skin was sky blue and the sea looked so wonderful. The flute always makes me think about the wilderness or something peaceful like that. Just thinking about their tails swinging across, and then splashing back into the sea makes me relax and feel so calm. The flute always echoes in my ear.

Anthony Rivera

PEACE

I am at peace with the world,
Concentrating on the soft sounds of music,
Silence is all I can hear.

Francisco Rosado

Contemplation #31

As I listened, I remembered a dream I had. I was on a beautiful island with no people. There were just trees. It was only me. I got scared for a minute, but then I started to think: "I'm all alone, no harm or evil, and no television to hear about the war. I was in complete peace. If only life was peace...

Angie Cosme

THE LAST MAN

The last man
who stood on Earth
left because
of feelings
that were abnormal:
The man left Earth
for **peace.**

Tyrone Dixon

SHOW #2

The following students contributed their contemplations:

1) Marilyn Rodriguez

2) Janelle Viruet

3) Sarai Tejada

4) Katrina Irizarry

5) Anthony Rivera

6) Migdalia Villodas

7) Glennie Llano

8) Irvin Lopez

9) Angie Cosme

10) Jason Dueno

11) Hiram Quesada

CLOSER: SHOW #2

FOR TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE, I'M JEFFREY PFLAUM OF PUBLIC SCHOOL 16 IN WILLIAMSBURG, BROOKLYN. "POETRY-IN-THE-MORNING" IS PRODUCED BY IRWIN GONSHAK AND BROADCAST ON WNYE-FM...NEW YORK.